

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

- [1. What is the National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)?](#)
- [2. Why does South Dakota participate in NAEP?](#)
- [3. What is the difference between NAEP and South Dakota's state assessments?](#)
- [4. Why do we have both NAEP and the state assessments?](#)
- [5. Is participation in NAEP voluntary? Are the results confidential?](#)

Questions About the Assessments

- [1. What subjects does NAEP assess and how are the subjects chosen?](#)
- [2. What kinds of questions are asked by NAEP?](#)
- [3. How does NAEP accommodate students with disabilities \(SD\) and students with limited English proficiency \(LEP\)?](#)
- [4. How do NAEP's Accommodations compare with the accommodations that South Dakota offers its students?](#)

Questions About Results from the Assessments

- [1. What results does NAEP provide?](#)
- [2. When will the results be available?](#)
- [3. Can my school get school-level or individual student-level results?](#)

General Questions

1. What is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a congressionally mandated project overseen by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to continuously monitor the knowledge, skills, and performance of the Nation's children and youth. As the "Nation's Report Card," NAEP has measured and reported on a regular basis what America's fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students know and can do since 1969. It provides objective data about students' performance at national, regional, and, as of 1990, state levels in reading, writing, mathematics, science, U.S. history, civics, geography, the arts, and other subjects. NAEP is the leading national assessment of what America's students know and can do in many other academic subjects and provides information on not only state and national student achievement, but on how that achievement has changed over time.

NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools; instead, it offers results regarding subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment for populations of students (e.g., fourth-graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). NAEP

results are based on a sample of student populations of interest. To see results based on specific demographic information go to the [NAEP Data Tool](#)

[Back to top](#)

2. Why does South Dakota participate in NAEP?

One reason South Dakota chooses to participate in NAEP is because NAEP data is a valuable source of information. The state uses NAEP results to supplement the information we get from our own tests. NAEP allows South Dakota to directly compare how its students perform relative to the nation and students in other states.

Another reason for South Dakota's participation is new this year. The [No Child Left Behind](#) legislation passed by the U.S. Congress in 2001 requires that states receiving federal "Title I" education funds participate in NAEP reading and mathematics assessments at grades 4 and 8 every two years.

You can view South Dakota's participation history and performance by selecting South Dakota from the [NAEP State Profiles](#). Within the state's profile you will find visual displays that permit you to compare South Dakota's performance with that of the nation and other states.

[Back to top](#)

3. What is the difference between NAEP and South Dakota's state assessments?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has two major goals:

- to reflect current educational and assessment practices and
- to measure change reliably over time.

NAEP offers results regarding subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment for populations of students (e.g., fourth-graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). NAEP results are based on a sample of student populations.

The design of the NAEP assessments does not allow for reporting on individual student achievement or school or district-level data. Reports traditionally disclose state, regional, and national results. Because NAEP is a large-group assessment, each student takes only a small part of the overall assessment. In most schools, only a small portion of the total grade enrollment is selected to take the assessment and these students may not reliably or validly represent the total school population. Only when the student scores are aggregated at the state or national level are the data considered reliable and valid estimates of what

students know and can do in the content area; consequently, school- or student-level results are never reported.

South Dakota's Statewide Assessment System has four major goals:

- To provide information on individual student achievement on performance standards set by the State Board of Education
- To provide information for policy decisions by the legislature, the governor, the State Board of Education, and local school districts
- To support instructional program improvement efforts
- To inform the public about student achievement in South Dakota schools.

For more information on South Dakota's Statewide Assessments go to:

<http://www.state.sd.us/deca/TA/testing/index.htm>

[Back to top](#)

4. Why do we have both NAEP and the state assessments?

South Dakota's Statewide Assessments and NAEP provide different kinds of information. The state tests measure student performance against South Dakota's Content Standards, i.e., what the state considers important for our students to know and be able to do. South Dakota's Statewide Assessments allow comparisons of results over time within the state, and give individual student scores so that parents can know how their child is performing. State tests do not provide comparisons of results with other states or the nation because different states use a variety of different types of tests, which would make comparisons invalid.

NAEP is the only assessment that allows us to compare results from one state with those of another, or with results for the rest of the nation because the same assessment is administered across the nation. NAEP helps states answer such questions as: How does the performance of students in our state compare with the performance in other states with similar resources or students? How does South Dakota's performance compare with the region's? Are our state's gains in student performance keeping up with the pace of improvement in other states?

Together, South Dakota's Statewide Assessment and NAEP help educators and policy makers develop a comprehensive picture of student performance.

5. Is participation in NAEP voluntary? Are the results confidential?

While NAEP is indeed voluntary, the *No Child Left Behind Act* clearly provides strong incentives for school districts and states to participate in NAEP. Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, those states that wish to receive Title 1 grants from the federal government must participate biennially in the fourth-grade and eighth-grade NAEP reading and mathematics assessments. The federal government assumes the full cost of administering these assessments.

Federal law also dictates complete privacy for all test takers as well as their families. Under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, P.L. 107-110 Title VI, Part C, Section 411 (5)(A), the Commissioner is charged with ensuring that authorized NAEP tests "do not evaluate or access personal or family beliefs and attitudes or publicly disclose personally identifiable information." After publishing NAEP reports, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) makes data available to researchers but withholds students' names and other identifying information. In fact, the names of all participating students are not allowed to leave the schools in which the NAEP assessments are administered. Although it might be possible for researchers to deduce the identities of some NAEP schools, they must swear, under penalty of fines and jail terms, to keep these identities confidential.

[Back to top](#)

Questions About the Assessments

1. What subjects does NAEP assess and how are the subjects chosen?

Since its inception in 1969, NAEP has assessed numerous academic subjects, including mathematics, science, reading, writing, world geography, U.S. history, civics, and the arts. In addition to these subjects, NAEP is developing assessments in world history, economics, and foreign language.

Since 1988, the [National Assessment Governing Board](#) (NAGB), sets policy for NAEP and has selected the subjects assessed by NAEP. Furthermore, NAGB oversees creation of the frameworks and test specifications that serve as the blueprint for the assessments. The framework for each subject area is determined through a framework development process that involves teachers, curriculum specialists, subject-matter specialists, school administrators, parents, and members of the general public.

Beginning with the 2003 assessment, NAEP will conduct national and state assessments at least once every two years in reading and mathematics in grades 4 and 8.

[Back to top](#)

2. What kinds of questions are asked by NAEP?

A NAEP assessment is divided into two sections: subject-specific test questions and questions about student backgrounds and educational experiences.

1. Test questions for 2003 are asked to measure fourth- and eighth-grade students' knowledge and skills in reading and mathematics. Students are

asked questions on only one subject. Other subjects that NAEP periodically measures include writing, science, U.S. history, geography, civics, and the arts. The question below is an example of an eighth grade mathematics question.

Subject: Math

Grade: 8

Block 1996-8M3

No: 12

12. Jaime knows the following facts about points *A*, *B*, and *C*.

- Points *A*, *B*, and *C* are on the same line, but might not be in that order.
- Point *C* is twice as far from point *A* as it is from point *B*.

Jaime concluded that point *C* is always between points *A* and *B*.

Is Jaime's conclusion correct?

☐ Yes ☐ No

In the space provided, use a diagram to explain your answer.

2. Background questions are asked to get information about students' gender, race and ethnicity, and other topics. The questions are required by Congress to provide a more informative picture of how different groups of students are performing. NAEP is prohibited by law from asking about personal or family beliefs and attitudes.

The questions are either multiple choice, where the students choose from a few possible answers, or open-ended format, where the students write their own responses. By law, all NAEP questions are secular, neutral, and non-ideological.

To see background questions and examples of test questions previously asked on NAEP, view the 2003 demonstration booklets. A sample booklet is also available for viewing at participating schools. Also, more than a thousand sample test questions are available in the [NAEP Questions Tool](#).

Additional information is collected from the principals and teachers at participating schools. Information about classroom practices, teacher training, school environment, and other topics provide a better understanding of the environment in which students learn. You can view [all background questions for the 2003 assessment](#) on the NAEP web site.

[Back to top](#)

3. How does NAEP accommodate students with disabilities (SD) and students with limited English proficiency (LEP)?

NAEP has traditionally included more than 90 percent of the students selected for the sample. Even though the percentage of exclusion is now relatively small,

NAEP continually explores ways to further reduce exclusion rates while ensuring that NAEP results are representative and can be generalized.

The NAEP program did not allow some of the accommodations that are permitted in certain states and other testing programs. In particular, some programs allow comprehension questions and, in some instances, reading passages to be read aloud to the students. Such "read-aloud" accommodations were viewed by NAEP as changing the nature of the construct being measured (i.e., reading comprehension) and, hence, were not permitted. Also, because the NAEP program considers the domain of its reading assessment as "reading in English," no attempt was made to provide an alternate-language version of the instrument or to allow the use of bilingual dictionaries. (The "read-aloud" and bilingual accommodations are permitted in other NAEP subject area assessments.)

[Back to top](#)

4. How do NAEP Accommodations compare with the accommodations that South Dakota offers its students?

NAEP: Accommodations in the testing environment or administration procedures are provided for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Examples of accommodations permitted by NAEP are: extra time, testing in small groups or one-on-one sessions, reading aloud to student and scribing student's responses.

South Dakota: Accommodations should reflect the instructional approaches used for the child in the classroom. South Dakota offers a single comprehensive assessment system that includes every child.

Below is a chart indicating the accommodations allowed in both the NAEP and assessments administered in South Dakota.

Accommodations Provided in NAEP

NAEP: Accommodations in the testing environment or administration procedures are provided for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Examples of accommodations permitted by NAEP are: extra time, testing in small groups or one-on-one sessions, reading aloud to student and scribing student's responses.

Accommodation	NAEP	South Dakota
<i>Presentation Format</i>		
Explanation of directions (simplification)	Yes	Yes
Oral reading in English	Yes	Yes (nonstandard for reading portion, allowed for all other subtests)
Oral reading in native language	No	No
Person familiar to student administers test	Yes	Yes
Translation directions	No	Yes (ASL, cued speech)
Translation of test into native language	No	No
Bilingual version of test	Yes (mathematics only)	No
Repeat directions	Yes	Yes
Large Print	Yes	Yes
Bilingual dictionary	Yes (except for reading)	Yes (without definitions)
<i>Setting Format</i>		
Alone in study carrel	Yes	Yes
Administer test in separate room	Yes	Yes
With small groups	Yes	Yes
Preferential seating	Yes	Yes
Special lighting	Yes	Yes
Special furniture	Yes	Yes
<i>Timing/Scheduling</i>		
Extended testing time (same day)	Yes	Yes
More breaks	Yes	Yes
Extending sessions over multiple days	Yes	Yes
<i>Response Format</i>		
Braille writers	Yes	Yes
Word processors or similar assistive device	Yes	Yes (turn off spell and grammar checks)
Write directly in test booklet	Yes	Yes
Tape recorders	No	Yes
Scribes	Yes	Yes
Answer orally, point or sign an answer	Yes	Yes
One-on-One administration	Yes	Yes

<i>Other Accommodations Provided for State Assessment but not for NAEP</i>		
Braille edition of assessment	No	Yes (nonstandard)
Audio tape administration of assessment	No	Yes
Calculator	No	Yes (math problem solving, nonstandard for math calculation)
Abacus	No	Yes
Arithmetic tables	No	Yes (math problem solving, nonstandard for math calculation)
Graph paper	No	Yes
Responses in native primary language	No	Yes (nonstandard)
Thesaurus	No	No
Spelling and grammar checking software and devices	No	No

Questions About Results from the Assessments

1. What results does NAEP provide?

NAEP provides results about subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment and reports these results for groups of students (e.g., fourth-graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., male students or Hispanic students).

NAEP does *not* provide individual scores for the students or schools assessed. Subject-matter achievement is reported in two ways—scale scores and achievement levels—so that student performance can be more easily understood. NAEP scale score results provide information about the distribution of student achievement for groups and subgroups. Achievement levels categorize student achievement as *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*, using ranges of performance established for each grade. (A fourth level, below *Basic*, is also reported for this scale.) Achievement levels are used to report results in terms of a set of standards for what students should know and be able to do.

Because NAEP scales are developed independently for each subject, scale score and achievement level results cannot be compared across subjects. However, these reporting metrics greatly facilitate performance comparisons within a subject from year to year and from one group of students to another in the same grade.

[Back to top](#)

2. When will the results be available?

September 2003—NAEP 2003 Reading and Mathematics results are scheduled for release.

3. Can my school get school-level or individual student-level results?

No. Reports traditionally disclose state, regional, and national results. By design, information will not be available at individual and school levels for several reasons.

- Each student only takes a small part of the overall assessment (about 25%), so only when the scores are aggregated across the state, region, or Nation are the data considered reliable and valid estimates of what students know and can do in the content area
- Typically, only a small number of students in a school participate, so it is not a valid representation of the participating school's population

- Federal law dictates that NAEP data remain confidential, so all personally identifiable information about students and individual schools is removed at the school on the day of the assessment before the test booklets and student lists are sent to NAEP for scoring

[Back to top](#)